

Rotten Roger.

The parable of the prodigal son

Once upon a time there was a boy called Roger. Well actually he was a teenager rather than a boy, and a not very nice teen-ager at that. Some people called him 'Roger the Raver' because he was always going to parties. But other people called him 'Rotten Roger' because he could be rude and mean and play nasty tricks on people. He was generally a big head and show off much of the time.

Now Roger lived in a little village where nothing much ever happened. He got bored, and the more bored he got the ruder he became. Until, when he had been rude and nasty to everyone in his village, no one wanted to know him any more.

"I'm fed up of this crumby little place!" said Roger to his Dad one morning. "Give me lots of money so I can go to the city and get a life!"

It made his Dad very sad that Roger was like this and he was sure that if he gave him money Roger would be off to the city wasting it in no time at all. But, despite Roger being as nasty as he was, his Dad still loved him. So he gave him some money and Roger set off on his very loud and very fast motorbike in the direction of the city.

"Oh dear," said his Dad to himself. "I do hope he'll be alright and come back again some day."

In the city Roger the Raver lived up to his name. He had parties every night; hundreds of people came and Roger was the most popular person in the whole city, or so he thought anyway.

"I've got lots of friends!" he boasted to himself one day as he reached into his money bag. But then Roger stopped. To his horror there was nothing left in the bag, not a single penny.

"Never mind," said Roger, "my friends will help me."

But when he told them he had run out of money, one by one his so called friends slammed their doors in his face and told him to "Go away" or "clear off!" Or other not very nice things.

Roger was left out on the street with no money, no friends and no food. He was cold and hungry and worse still, it started to pour with rain. Things could not get any worse. After a few days Roger was very hungry and desperate to get a job, but all he could find was a job looking after pigs in a muddy and dirty field. He had to live in the pig sty and what's more, the farmer wouldn't pay him until the end of the week! Roger was so hungry he wanted to stuff himself with the putrid and disgusting muck that the pigs were eating, but it made him feel sick just to smell it, let alone eat it.

Meanwhile, back in Rogers home village, his Dad had never stopped thinking about Roger. He kept his photo by his bed and every morning he would stand by

the roadside and peer into the distance, hoping beyond hope that he might see Roger far away making his way home.

Roger sat in the pig sty. He had plenty of time to think. He remembered his village, his Dad, his house, his bed, and more than anything else he wanted to go back home.

"I can't go back though," he thought, "Dad will just send me away again. I've been so stupid!"

But then he made a decision.

"I will go back home and ask Dad if I can be the gardener. I could live in the garden shed and eat the scraps. Even that would be wonderful compared to this pig sty."

So off he set.

Roger walked all the way. He didn't have a motorbike any more. He slept under trees and in caves, but eventually he found himself on the road that led to his village. He imagined himself knocking on his Dad's front door and he rehearsed his little speech.

"Err hem ..Dad, I'm sorry I've been such an idiot. Can I be your gardener? I'll work hard and I'd be no trouble at all. Please forgive me, I've been really stupid."

But before Roger could say anything he was nearly knocked over by a man who came running at full speed along the street. The man threw his arms around Roger and gave him a great hug. It was a few moments before Roger realised it was his Dad.

"Dad, Dad," Roger started, "I'm"

But before he could say any more his Dad said:

"Roger! Roger! Welcome home! Come in and change your clothes. Come and have a bath. Have some food. Come and have a rest in your old bed."

Roger didn't get a chance to say anything. But in no time at all he found himself in the house, washed and clean with new clothes and sandals and a special ring on his finger. His Dad sat him at the dinner table and in no time at all it was piled high with his favourite food. Suddenly Roger had the most amazing feeling inside of himself. He knew then and there that he would never leave his home again because he knew without a doubt that his Dad loved him even though he had been so bad. And as he looked at his Dad's delighted face he realised that he loved him too. Roger worked hard after that and he soon had a new nickname in the village – Reliable Roger! – and everyone marvelled at how Roger had changed.

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